THE
CATHOLIC RADICAL

"...to foster a society based on creed instead of greed." Peter Maurin

December/January 2018-19 ***Price: For whatever it's worth.***

Shunning Sinners

by Scott Schaeffer-Duffy

In *The Scarlet Letter,* Nathaniel Hawthorne depicted Hester Prynne as a Puritan woman who bore a child out of wedlock and was forced to wear a red "A" to mark her for life as an adulteress. The righteous members of her community shunned her.

Eric Gill (1882-1940) was an English sculptor and print maker whose work often appeared in Catholic Worker newspapers, including this one. Peter Maurin recommended Gill's writing to Dorothy Day. In the *The Long Loneliness*, she praised Gill as pacifist, anarchist, and opponent of "the servile state." In his autobiography, Gill described his life's work as making "a cell of good living in the chaos of our world." But the iconic image of Gill as model progressive Catholic came crashing down with the 1989 publication of a biography by Fiona MacCarthy exposing the fact that Gill had sexually abused his daughters and committed incest with his sister. Since then, his work has rarely been displayed, and a movement is afoot to demolish his sculptures.

The public erasure of Eric Gill mirrors what I assume will happen to the work of Bill Cosby. I very much doubt his comedy routines or his long-running television show will see the light of day again. Like Gill, Cosby presented himself as a decent person when, in fact, he was an unrepentant sexual predator. Admiring Gill's or Cosby's art is conflated with trivializing their crimes, disrespecting their victims, and giving license to abusers. And so, every aspect of both men is shunned.

Like *The Boston Globe's* investigative reporting on the extent of clergy sex abuse in the Catholic Church, the MeToo movement brought to light rampant sexual mistreatment of women in business,

politics, and entertainment. Powerful figures like Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein, the movie star Kevin Spacey, and Senator Al Franken were forced to resign, although the accusations against Franken were far less serious than those against Weinstein and Spacey.

After he was accused of sexual misconduct, the comedian Louis C. K. said:

These stories are true... I learned yesterday the extent to which. I left these women who admired me feeling badly about themselves and cautious around other men who would never have put them in that position. I also took advantage of the fact that I was widely admired in my and their community, which disabled them from sharing their story and brought hardship to them when they tried because people who look up to me didn't want to hear it.... There is nothing about this that I forgive myself for.

Despite his remorse, Louis C.K.'s

(Continued on Page 2)

Those Who Did Not Kill

by Claire Schaeffer-Duffy

In London's Tavistock Square stands a monument to conscientious objectors from every war and country. It is one of several memorials in this small, charming park and the most unique. A massive slab of Cumbrian shale hauled down from northern England. Inscribed on one side are the words, "To all those who have established and are maintaining the right to refuse to kill. Their foresight and courage give us hope."

Every year on May 15th, International Conscientious Objector's Day, British peace groups assemble at the monument to remember the refusers. Scott and I attended this year's commemoration which came to mind during the centenary observances for the end of World War One.

Six million British men fought in the Great War that was supposed to end all wars. Seven hundred and fifty thousand died, and many more returned home physically and mentally maimed. Twenty thousand men refused to fight. (Three times that number would do so in the war that followed twenty-one years later.)

As with COs everywhere, their path was a difficult and lonely one. Local tribunals, hostile to pacifism, rarely granted absolute exemption from conscription. Many requests were simply denied. Those given conditional exemptions were assigned to the Noncombatant Corps as medics or required to do "work of national importance."

The obdurate ones, refusing any association with war-making, were imprisoned or held in camps often in harsh conditions. Upwards to 100 men died as a

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Shunning

(Continued from Page 1)

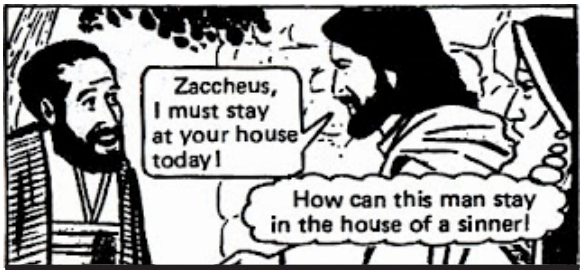
career might well be over.

Victims, who have long suffered disbelief, ridicule, and disdain for accusing men of sexual abuse, might call the shunning of sexual abusers a sliver of justice. Given Brett Kavanaugh's confirmation to the US Supreme Court without an in depth investigation into allegations of sexual assault, some might say that nothing has changed since the US Senate disregarded Anita Hill's allegations against Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas in 1991. After all, while some figures have been driven into the wasteland, no one has any illusions that sexual abuse is a thing of the past. Just as the Black Lives Matter movement celebrates the convictions a police officers in Dallas and Chicago for killing unarmed black suspects, the MeToo movement is aware that, in most instances, perpetrators are more often exonerated than punished.

I think of US Army Lt. William Calley who, on March 16, 1968, led his troops to systematically kill as many as 500 mostly women, children, and infants in the South Vietnamese hamlet My Lai. Court-martialed for murder, Calley could have been executed, but instead served three and a half years under house arrest. Sympathy for Calley arose from the fact that he was singled out for punishment when atrocities were widespread.

As a peace activist, can I ever publish a poem by Calley? Do I always have to disclaim him as a war criminal? Should museums take down Paul Gauguin's paintings because of his chauvinism and colonialism? Does the fact that Brett Kavanaugh's alleged sexual assualt happened when he was very young count for anything? Dozens of women who have worked for him as an adult insist he never disrespected them. Assuming Kavanaugh was guilty of sexual assault, can his slate be washed clean by repentance? If not, World War II combat vets like Phil Berrigan and persecutors of Christians like Saint Paul would be lost to humanity.

In his fine article "A Time to Reckon, A Time to Repair," (*Hartford Catholic Worker*, Fall 2018) Chris Douçot sets the bar appropriately high by saying, "Of course, I believe in rehabilitation; but first there must be reckoning, repentance, and reparation: the essential ingredients toward reconciliation." And yet, while cheap grace or any other get-out-of-jail-free card is not likely to prevent future abuse, summary social executions don't seem efficacious either.



Jesus ate and drank with tax collectors and prostitutes, people the religious establishment shunned. He marveled at the faith of a centurion, an officer in the Roman occupying army. More to the point, after hearing God's punishment for murdering Abel, Cain says, "**My punishment is greater than I can bear. You have driven me from the face of the earth, and from Your face I will be hidden; I will be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me**," but God, who did not want Cain shunned, replies, "**Not so; anyone who kills Cain will suffer vengeance seven times over.**"

When Saint Paul poses the question, "**What can separate us from the love of God**?," he defines an unbreakable bond. When Jesus tells us to love one another as he has loved us, he invites us to bear witness to that bond.

In an article entitled "Eric Gill: can we separate the artist from the abuser?" (*The Guardian*, 4/9/17), Rachel Cooke wrote: *When I contact Fiona MacCarthy, she tells me she has watched in "dismay" as the fact of Gill's abuse of his daughters has grown to become the thing that defines him. "My book was never a book about incest, which is what one would imagine from many hysterical contemporary responses," she says. "It was a book about the multifaceted life of a multi-talented artist and an absorbingly interesting man." As people demand the demolition of his sculpture in public places – the Stations of the Cross in Westminster Cathedral, Prospero and Ariel at Broadcasting House – she asks where this will end: "Get rid of Gill, but who chooses the artist with morals so impeccable that they could take his place?"*

Balancing justice and mercy is delicate work. If we veer too far in one direction, we leave the innocent vulnerable to harm. If we tilt hard in the opposite direction, we are no better than a lynch mob. As someone who is hardly without sin myself, I'm more than reluctant to cast the first stone. If I'm to have any chance at all of salvation, it will rely more on God's mercy than justice. I will need every ounce of good that I have accomplished in my life to count. If my good deeds are erased, then I might as well be too. Besides, like in Hawthorne's novel, a scarlet letter doesn't dispel evil, it perpetrates it. Ω

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Email:theresecw2@gmail.com

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The New Colossus

By Emma Lazarus, 1883

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.

"Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!" Ω

You shall love the stranger, for you were once strangers in the land of Egypt.
Deuteronomy 10: 19

The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.
Leviticus 19:3

Alberto Lesdena

Bent to the Earth

By Blas Manuel De Luna

They had hit Ruben
with the high beams, had blinded
him so that the van
he was driving, full of Mexicans
going to pick tomatoes,
would have to stop.

Ruben spun
the van into an irrigation ditch,
spun the five-year-old me awake
to immigration officers,
their batons already out,
already looking for the soft spots on the body,
to my mother being handcuffed
and dragged to a van, to my father
trying to show them our green cards.

They let us go. But Alvaro
was going back.
So was his brother Fernando.
So was their sister Sonia. Their mother
did not escape,
and so was going back. Their father
was somewhere in the field,
and was free.

There were no great truths
revealed to me then. No wisdom
given to me by anyone. I was a child
who had seen what a piece of polished wood
could do to a face, who had seen his father
about to lose the one he loved, who had lost
some friends who would never return,
who, later that morning, bent
to the earth and went to work. Ω

Do Not Kill

(Continued from Page 1)

result of their imprisonment.

At the commemoration in Tavistock Square, a white banner displayed photos and short bios for a dozen or more British COs from the First World War. Among them were brothers Albert and Walter Roberts Hewely who died while in prison, poet John Rodker, and Thomas Atlee, a staunch "absolutist," imprisoned from 1917-1919 because his Christian principles did not permit him to kill.

The day's ceremony included a few short speeches. A stalwart chorus of gray-haired women sang songs about the courage of "the ones who said No." Then came the annual tradition of reading from a representative list of COs, past and present, from around the world. Seventy nine countries were represented in the recitation. As each name was solemnly read, a man or women from the crowd walked in silence to the rock monument to lay a white carnation.

Here was an observance in honor of those who did *not* pick up the gun, run the drill, board the ship or plane, to stalk through jungle, hunch in trenches, sit in the open door of a chopper and shoot and shoot and shoot until heart and soul shrank in upon themselves.

War's End by Howard Brodie

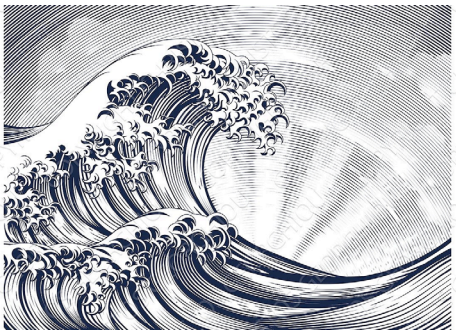
To refuse to fight in war is often a solitary choice, one that must feel ineffective at the time it is made. Many communities revile their COs or dismiss them as peculiar souls who could not "suck it up" and follow war's requirement. Seeing them collectively honored on that sunlit afternoon in Tavistock Square, I felt the potency of their individual acts, conscience catching the flicker of conscience across the years and miles. Ω

Culture of War and Violence	Culture of Peace and Non-Violence
Belief in power based on force	Education for a culture of peace
Having an enemy	Understanding, tolerance, and solidarity
Authoritarian government	Democratic participation
Secrecy and propaganda	Free flow of information
Armament	Disarmament
Exploitation of people	Human rights
Exploitation of nature	Sustainable development
Male Domination	Equality of women and men

United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

Oceans Heating

by Matt McGrath



Editor's Note: From BBC News, *11/1/18.*

According to the last major assessment by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the world's oceans have taken up over 90% of the excess heat trapped by greenhouse gases. But this new study says that every year, for the past 25 years, we have put about 150 times the amount of energy used to generate electricity globally into the seas - 60% more than previous estimates....

The researchers believe the new finding will make it much harder to keep within the temperature rise targets set by governments in the Paris agreement....

The report suggests that to prevent temperatures rising above 2C, carbon emissions from human activities must be reduced by 25% more than previously estimated....

"A warmer ocean will hold less oxygen, and that has implications for marine ecosystems," said Dr. Laure Resplandy of Princeton. "There is also sea level, if you warm the ocean more you will have more thermal expansion and therefore more sea level rise." Ω

Extinction Rebellion

Catholic Workers Henrietta Cullinan, Richard Barnard , and Father Martin Newell cp, along with other members of Christian Climate Action, joined over a thousand people outside the Westminister Parliamrnt in London on October 31 in a "declaration of non-violent rebellion" against extinction. After a rally, the road was blocked for several hours. Sixteen people were arrested. More actions are expected during November. Ω

The Man Who Cannot Be Killed

a Catholic Worker mystery by Scott Schaeffer-Duffy

reviewed by Rosalie Riegle

Editor's Note: Rosalie Riegle is an oral historian, author, and activist. Among her works are: Voices from the Catholic Worker, Dorothy Day: Portraits by Those Who Knew Her*;* Doing Time for Peace: Peace, Resistance, Family, and Community*; and* Crossing the Line: Nonviolent Resisters Speak Out for Peace.

I've known and loved Scott Schaeffer-Duffy for far too long, probably since the Catholic Worker anniversary at the nuclear testing grounds in the Nevada desert, way back in 1987. I interviewed him about the Worcester Saints Francis and Thérèse CW a year later for *Voices from the Catholic Worke*r. From the get-go, I knew he was creative. For instance, he didn't mail the house of hospitality newsletter to supporters of the house, but distributed it on the streets and in grocery stores. And their house was certainly among the first to support itself by baking and selling bread, a craft that figures prominently in his latest book *The Man Who Cannot be Killed*.

No, that man isn't Scott—he's not that miraculous—but this book is a really fun read, and also one where you can learn a lot about what keeps a Catholic Worker going through the years, as Scott and his wife Claire have. One secret to his longevity in the work of the Worker is his insistence that God's plea in Psalm 46 to "**Be still and know that I am God**" means that we can "take a break, sleep late. . . dance. . . and enjoy a million other things now and then without feeling guilty." I encourage you to do the same thing by picking up this delightful book.

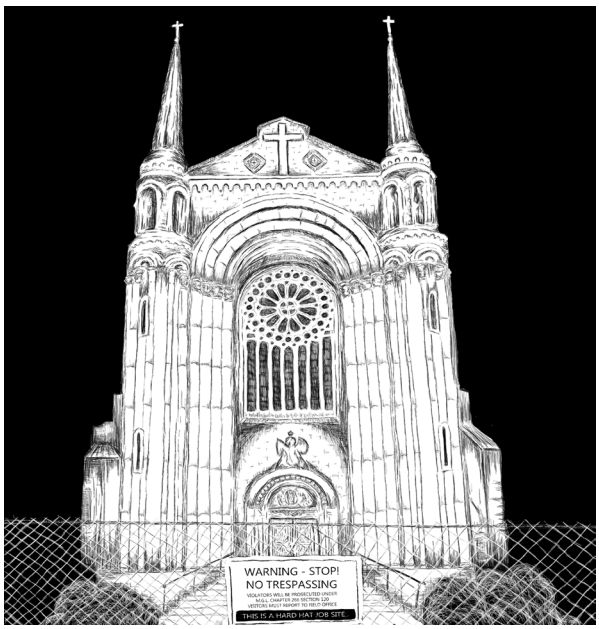
Scott is a writer, a runner, a bread baker, a sometime meditator, a husband and father and grandfather, a sometime paranoid dreamer of vivid nightmares. Both his nightmares and his meditations fill me with envy. Did Jesus ever give you a remote?

Scott and Claire also take "Catholic Worker vacations" by going to CW retreats and, along with marathons and bread-baking, this book details his adventures while attending the 2018 CW Euro Retreat in beautiful Dülmen, Germany.

It's tied together by a fictional mystery but outside of that, everything happened, as it was written in real time, that is, as it was lived by Scott and Claire and their colleagues and friends circling the Worcester house and others.

Scott may not know it but he's invented another literary genre. After all, who footnotes a diary?! Scott does; his sometimes hilarious endnotes crown him as a pop culture trivia king. Much of the rest of the book is funny too, but the spiritual insights about the Catholic Worker life are what I'll remember. What most resonates is his conclusion that in the Catholic Worker, "You're in control of your own life in an incredible way" and that the "freedom is enormously exhilarating and a lot of fun."

Give yourself some fun in these awful times—read *The Man Who Cannot be Killed*. Then go out and find some of that freedom yourself. Ω



Aiden Duffy

Other Reviews

Scott Schaeffer-Duffy's quick-witted humor fuels a narrative that deftly moves through memoir, mystery, and dreamy recall. Lightheartedly poking fun at his own shortcomings and phobias helps him encourage others to go easy on themselves. And yet, Schaeffer-Duffy grapples with the terrors of global warming and the challenges of living in a permanent warfare state. An ultimate dialogue helps him make the case for persistent optimism. These are stories to enjoy and share, trusting the navigator's unusual blend of what Ammon Hennacy called for: courage, wisdom, and love.

Kathy Kelly
Voices for Creative Nonviolence
Chicago, Illinois

I was immediately drawn into the world of the narrator: Worcester, pacifists, fascinating characters. The humor is marvelous. I love the ease and flow of the language. A delight to read.

Jay O'Callahan
Storyteller
Marshfield, Massachusetts

To buy a copy of
The Man Who Cannot Be Killed
a Catholic Worker mystery

Send $14.95, plus $2.05 for shipping to:

Scott Schaeffer-Duffy
Saints Francis & Thérèse Catholic Worker
52 Mason Street, Worcester, MA 01610

Also available by Scott:

Nothing Is Impossible:
stories from the life of a Catholic Worker
$24.95 plus $3.05 for shipping

Murder on Mott Street:
a Catholic Worker mystery
$12 plus $2 for shipping

LETTERS

Dear Scott and Claire,
...My uncle died last month. I was thrilled to hear, after a lifetime of trying to hide his Cherokee heritage, he was buried in a Cherokee cemetery in Lodi, California.

In Maori culture, knowing your genealogy and your places of origin is very important. Having basically grown up a gypsy, totally disconnected to any piece of the earth, I made up for it by treating every tree, rock, piece of earth, etc. as something to be nurtured and respected. I suspect that is how I managed to maintain a connectedness to my roots despite having been severed from them.

For many non-indigenous people, the predominant cultural replacement seems to be capitalism and self-preservation. Many yearn for more than that. I firmly believe that all peoples, if they search far enough back into their cultural roots, will find that their people started out with a community-centered, land-based culture.

Here in our small part of New Zealand, we have been repeatedly given the message that our answers are to be found at a grass roots level. We've attended meetings about all sorts of social issues, and, time and time again, the "experts" aren't able to meet the needs. Besides, many of our social needs come from a disconnection. So, we are reminded repeatedly that our job is to focus on family, on sub-tribe level, to make re-connections for people to re-find themselves.

Colonization has a huge part to play in dysfunction among indigenous people. I'd go so far as to say capitalism has a huge part to play in dysfunction amongst **all** people...

I should clarify that I'm not against those who try to tackle big issues at a higher level. For me, though, the answers lie at the root of the problem, and my part of the solutions begins small — one by one—of building up individuals and their belief in themselves, so they don't have to look to drugs, violence, capitalism, etc. to fill the gaps.

Sheri Ellery Waata
Whirinaki, New Zealand

Dear Editors,
Yikes! I'm with Blake ["Love in a Time of Cold Water," an article on cold showers at the Brisbane Catholic Worker]. And I'll bet he was a guest: "It's been horrible. I've had like two showers in the past two months."

As someone of Cuban descent living in Canada, I'd just go somewhere else to have a shower, including free local recreation centres. If worse came to worse, I'd get two buckets, one with warm soapy water and one with clean warm water and have a sponge bath.

You might have mentioned that Australia is much milder than most of the US (certainly all of Canada) and that October is the beginning of spring for them. I also suspect their tap water is much warmer than ours, which comes straight from the bottom of Lake Ontario which is just above freezing year round.

And I just checked average WINTER temperatures for Brisbane. It's 21 C (70F)! That's like subtropical, for pity's sake!

Paul Connelly del Junco
Toronto, Canada

Dear Worcester Catholic Worker House,
Please discontinue my subscription to *The Catholic Radical*.

The reason is that you are not even close to radical enough: you never see through the lie that is the basis of the current 17 years of war.

You should just review the video of the World Trade Center Twin Towers, plus World Trade Center building 7, falling. Note the free-fall speed. It's a controlled demolition.

That takes months (if not years) of design and set-up, with full access to all support columns. This was done by a highly professional demolition company, who were paid very well.

If you refuse to look at the basis for the terror wars, you do your readers a great and immoral disservice.

Rich McCampbell, P.E.
SNC-Lavalin Consulting Engineer
Andover, Massachusetts

Editor's Note: We sponsored a showing of an excellent documentary on 9/ll made by engineers and fire-fighters. We believe there are a great many facts which contradict the official narrative on the attacks. For example, no on ever explained how Wall Street investors knew to sell record amounts of airline stock on September 10, 2001. We fully support a new, independent investigation. We have no illusions as to the extent to which governments will go to stir up their populations for war. It has happened time and time again.

At the same time, some of the rhetoric we have seen from the 9/11-was-a-put-up-job folks strikes us as so strident that it is easily dismissed. The government is empowered when whistle blowers are seen as cranks. In this time of lies and conspiracy theories, we are especially careful to publish information we can verify.

Dear Scott,
Hey! I received your letter of 10/14 on Friday night. It was nice to hear from you again, although I worry you write at the expense of the myriad projects you probably have underway. I also received your flyer about climate change, a topic/issue that has always concerned me even here in prison. Why am I not surprised you too are concerned?

The preservation of our planet for future generations may be the one cause to rally all of the good people of the earth under a single banner. What a shame, though, it must come to that.

Barring technological advances for which there is no precedent, it seems to me that population control is essential.

It would be easier not to care, much easier. Like a Republican, I guess.

It takes a certain kind of person to care only about themselves, and the fact that the earth will persevere for their own lifetime. For some reason, my own sense of well-being has always encompassed that of others. It's a vexing way to be.

No, I did not get a letter from the

subscriber you mentioned — or anyone else. Except you, of course — which is hardly cause for disappointment. Clearly, it is the rare individual whose self-interest lies in being a friend to someone in prison. Do not construe that as a criticism of humanity, however. People exist in context, and increasingly so, as surely you must know. It is what it is. And again, I consider myself fortunate to be writing to you.

I do not know if I am properly characterized as calm and collected after 38 years in prison. Basically, I just put one foot in front of the other. Not having any family or friends, I've never really had the freedom to feel content with my life for so much as a moment. It's left me focused on abstract realities, the nature of humanity, God, and even right and wrong. Which can be oppressive. On the bright side, at least I have that much depth.

Certainly my sentencing judge was cruel, to answer your question. However, that is not the exception in Nevada, but rather the hard and fast rule. Judges are elected and then endlessly re-elected just for handing out maximum sentences. The prison system is equally cruel, I fear....

I trust this finds you well.

Richard Deeds #14946
PO Box 650
Indian Springs, NV 89070

Editor's Note: Becausesince our nation incarcerates more of its population than any other industrialized country, it behooves all of us to be informed about the reality behind bars. Writing to a prisoner is an intimate way to become more informed while performing an essential work of mercy.

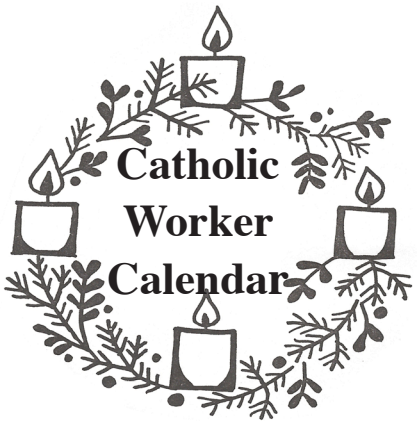
Dear Claire and Scott,
Another great *Radical*!!

I was thirteen in October 1962 [during the Cuban missile crisis]. All the girls were crying, thinking it was the end of the world. Little did I know that seven years later I'd be serving in a US Navy nuclear-capable squadron.

I still remember, when we docked in Naples; three buddies and I took the train to Rome. We shared the compartment with a woman and suckling infant. As we sat there, I thought, if our aircraft ever got their final orders, the woman and the infant would have been our victims.

A chilling and sobering thought !!

Ray Graglia
Rutherford, New Jersey



December 16 — Book Release: Join us at the Mustard Seed Catholic Worker, 93 Piedmont Street, Worcester to celebrate the release of Scott Schaeffer-Duffy's new book *The Man who Cannot Be Killed: a Catholic Worker mystery*. 2-3 P.M.

December 5, 19 & January 9 — Evening Prayer: Join us for prayer and Taize chant. 7 P.M., 52 Mason Street. Refreshments to follow.

December 15 & January 12 & 23 — Vigil to Reverse the Gun Culture: Join us at The Gun Parlor shooting range. 12:30-1:30 P.M., 170 Prescott Street, Worcester.

December 23— Christmas Caroling: Join us to sing at a nursing home and in our neighborhood. Cookies & mulled cider to follow. Meet at 52 Mason Street. 5 P.M.

January 16 — Sing Along: The incomparable Dan Burke accompanies us with music from many generations. Send your favorite songs to theresecw2@gmail.com. An event not to be missed. We'll provide the lyrics, food, and drink. 7 P.M. 52 Mason Street.

Yes! I am a Radical

by Peter Maurin (1877-1949)
co-founder of The Catholic Worker

I was once thrown out
of a Knights of Columbus meeting
because, as the K. of C. official said,
I was radical.
I was introduced as a radical
before the college students
of a Franciscan college,
And the Franciscan Father added
"I am as radical
as Peter Maurin."
Speaking in a girls' college
near St. Cloud, Minnesota,
I was told by Bishop Busch,
"Conservatives
are up in a tree
and you are trying
to go down to the roots."

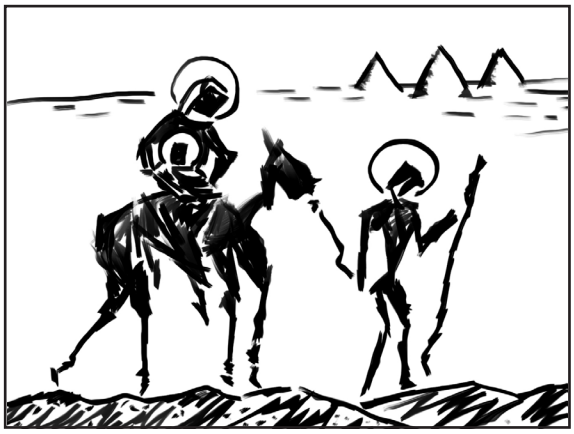
To be radically right
is to go to the roots
by fostering a society
based on creed,
systematic unselfishness
and gentle personalism.
To foster a society
based on creed
instead of greed,
on systematic unselfishness
instead of systematic selfishness,
on gent1e personalism
instead of rugged individualism,
is to create a new society
within the shell of the old. Ω

Mason Street Musings

Miriam König, a delightful young woman from Germany, is interning with us for six months. Among many things, she volunteered to be the photographer for the cross country team I coach. As we walked the course before our final race, she talked with Anglan who described his experience in the mountains of Vietnam before his family emigrated to the United States in 2008. Typically, half my runners are first or second generation Americans from Vietnam, China, Laos, Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Brazil, or the Dominican Republic. I also have several Puerto rican Americans. When combined with the diverse guests we host here on Mason Street (we just had one from Mauritania, for example), Miriam might say that our country truly is a haven for immigrants.

Unfortunately, despite the fact that no American save the Native Americans are indigenous, hostility to new arrivals is soaring. While the Statue of Liberty's raised torch invites those seeking a better life to come here, the poor and victims of violence are routinely denied entry.

At Christmas, we focus on how God's immigration from heaven to earth was greeted with joy by shepherds and Magi, but we often forget that Judea's political leader responded with fury. Only the family's swift flight to Egypt saved Jesus, from the slaughter Herod inflicted on every infant in Bethlehem. Thankfully, the Egyptians did not reject Mary, Joseph, and Jesus as having come from a "shit hole" country. They did not have to trek across the desert evading militiamen who poison or destroy bottles of water left behind by good Samaritans. They were not called illegals, drug dealers, gang members, sexual predators, or terrorists. The Holy Family was not separated and imprisoned. Neither were they shackled with electronic monitors while their case for asylum was being considered. Nor did Pharaoh describe families seeking safety as an invasion requiring the deployment of his army.



Aiden Duffy

Our friend Ken Hannaford-Ricardi always said that the Christmas issue of *The Catholic Radical* and especially this column should be laden with joy, but as a parent and grandparent my heart is sick with shame over our nation's response to families fleeing poverty, crime, natural disasters, and war. The President says our economy has never been better, and yet, like the rich man Dives, we feast while Lazarus starves outside our gate. Driven by racism and fear, we proclaim, "No room at the inn!" only to miss the opportunity to embrace the Holy Family. For as Jesus reminds us, "**Whatever you do for the least, you do for me**."

Earlier in the cross country season, while we walked a particularly bucolic course in South Lancaster, Anglan started singing, "Almost heaven, West Virginia.... Take me home, country road, to the place I belong." Soon the entire team adopted John Denver's song as its anthem. We even put "Almost Heaven" on our team sweatshirts.

Isn't this what all human beings desire: to make heaven here on earth? Isn't this what Christmas is about? Perfection in our midst? Hope triumphant over despair? Hospitality over hostility?

May this Christmas season help us all to lift a welcome lamp to those in need. Ω

Scott

SS. Francis & Thérèse Catholic Worker
52 Mason Street
Worcester, MA, USA 01610
(508) 753-3588 & (508) 753-3089

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